



Loudoun County Sheriff's Office

Crime Prevention Unit



NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH NEWSLETTER

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Important Numbers:

- * **Emergency 911**
- * **Non-Emergency**
703-777-1021
703-777-0445
- * **Poison Control**
1-800-222-1222
- Animal Control**
703-777-0406
- * **Sheriff's Office Admin**
703-777-0407
- * **Narcotic Tip Line**
703-779-0552
- * **Crime Solvers**
703-777-1919



Issue 14

December 7, 2009

Season for Giving

Many people like to give with an open heart to help others in need. Unfortunately, that means we've created a climate that's ripe for scams. Some people this time of year will try to tug at our heartstrings — and rake in the cash.

Fake charity scams often set up quasi-legitimate agencies so that, at first glance, they look real. They may also name themselves something similar to other legitimate agencies. They may even carry an ID in the name of the charity.

All this makes charity scams harder to spot. However, here are some tips to help

you out this holiday season:

1. Ask for the address or phone number of the charity and whether or not it's registered. If the presenters claim that it is registered, get a registration number. The Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance offers information about national charities. You can call them at **703-276-0100** or check out this website www.give.org. If you are trying to find out whether the charity is worthy of your support check out the reports section of the website.

2. Don't ever donate cash if you can help it. Write a check to the charity (not to

the person with the charity). This also helps you document the donation for your records and for tax returns. Do not give out bank information either.

3. Ask what percentage of your donation goes directly

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Shopping Safety

The holiday season is a time when busy people can become careless and vulnerable to holiday crime. The following tips can help you be prepared and aware during this holiday season.

1. Shop during daylight hours when possible. If you must shop at night shop with a friend.
2. Avoid wearing expensive jewelry.
3. Even though you may

be rushing and doing a thousand things, **STAY AWARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS.**

4. Avoid carrying large amounts of cash.

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Safety at the ATM

ATM's are great for convenience, but they can compromise your safety. With more people using the ATM's in the next coming months there are some things to be considering when using one.

- Be observant— If you see anything suspicious, go to another machine or return later
- Shield your transaction—Do not give someone else the opportunity to see the numbers you are entering.
- Don't leave your receipt—keep your

transaction record with you when you leave.

- Put away your cash—Put away cash immediately. Do not display cash or count it at the machine. You can always count it later.
- Keep your car secured—Lock your car if you have to get out to use the ATM. If you are at a drive up ATM lock all doors and be sure the passenger window is rolled up.
- If ATM view is blocked by shrubs do

not use it.

-Park in a well lit area as close to the ATM as possible.

-Do not use the ATM if it is poorly lit at night.



Protecting children during the Holidays

The holiday season can present a potentially dangerous situation for children. Some simple measures can help keep your children safe during this holiday season.

1. Teach your child to go to a store clerk and ask for help in case your child is separated for you.
2. Teach children to stay close to you at all times.
3. Never allow children to go unaccompanied to the restroom.
4. Children should never be allowed to go to the car alone or be left in the car.
5. Teach children their full names, address and telephone numbers to give to the police or mall security.

Theft From Vehicles

January: 86

August: 83

February: 120

September: 50

March: 103

October: 36

April: 69

November: 64

May: 80

June: 143

July: 128

Holiday Fire safety

Each year many fires occurring during the holiday season and claim the lives of over 400 people, injure 1,650 more and cause \$990 million in damage.

Special fire precautions must be taken when keeping a live tree in the house. A burning tree can rapidly fill a room with fire and deadly gas.

-When choosing a tree make sure

the tree is freshly cut. (If tree trunk is bounced on the ground and many needles fall off the tree has probably dried out and can be a fire hazard)

-Do not place tree close to a heat source including a fireplace or heat vent.

-Do not put a live tree up too early or leave it up longer than 2 weeks.

-Keep tree stand filled with water.

Another thing to be cautious with is lighting and decorations.

-Inspect holiday lights for frayed wires, broken or cracked sockets, and excessive kinking or wear.

-Do not overload Electrical outlets. Do not link more than 3 strands of lights together unless the directions indicate its safe. Periodically check wires. (They should not be warm to the touch)

-Use only non-flammable decorations.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: If I am going to be traveling during the holidays would putting my lights on timers be a good idea?

When you are away from your house for any length of time it is always a good idea to make the residence look lived in or occupied. One way to do this is with putting your lights on timers. Some of the newer timers have built in random feature so that the lights will randomly come on and turn off.

Q: Should I have the post office hold my mail while I am away for the holidays?

You should do something about the mail when you leave for the holidays. One option would be stop the mail from being delivered. A problem with this is that people that are observant will notice the mailman not even stopping at your mailbox or not putting anything into your mailbox. This is a telltale sign that you are away. A better method would be to have a family

friend or trusted neighbor pick up your mail and your newspapers.



If you would like to have a question answered, please e-mail the question to **Nathaniel.Payne@loudoun.gov** or **James.Spurlock@loudoun.gov**

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to the cause. Legitimate charities will have that answer ready. (Most solicitors for charities take most of the money donated)

4. Be especially cautious about charities that claim to raise funds for local police or firefighters. Check with those agencies first.

3. The best way to avoid charity scams is to decide in advance which charities you will support and then contact them directly.

It feels good to give to those in need, but caution must be taken so you are not enriching scammers or a questionable charity.



Shopping Safety Cont. from page 1

5. Be extra careful of your wallet or purse. These can be prime targets in crowded shopping areas. **Never** leave your purse in a shopping cart unattended.
6. Park in a well lit area.
7. Beware of strangers approaching you for any reason. This time of year con artists may try various methods to distract you with the intention of taking money or belongings.
8. Carry a cell phone with you. If someone makes you suspicious or uncomfortable, notify security or call the Sheriff's Office.
9. Avoid leaving valuables in your vehicle. If you must put packages in your vehicle put them in the trunk.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS



There are no upcoming events this month.